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Iraq's Wartime Government: Power Shifts in the Regime

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A Research Paper

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July 1986

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,
with a contribution by [redacted] Office of
Leadership Analysis. It was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

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**Iraq's Wartime Government:
Power Shifts in the Regime**

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Summary

*Information available
as of 19 June 1986
was used in this report.*

The unexpected length and costs of the war with Iran have forced significant changes in decisionmaking within the Iraqi leadership. Unable to bring the conflict to an end quickly, Iraq's President Saddam Husayn has been forced to share power more broadly with his senior colleagues to bolster his sagging political support and to spread responsibility for war policy. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) has emerged as the apex of the Iraqi power structure. It is headed by Saddam, who, along with eight other top political leaders, makes all decisions of significance. Baghdad's shift to collegial rule benefits the United States by making Iraq a more stable country and enhancing the influence of Iraqi officials who favor strengthened ties to the West.

The regime relies on four main pillars of support—the ruling Ba'th Party, in which all but one of the current RCC members got their political start; the bureaucracy, increasingly dominated by technocrats; the security services, run in part by relatives of Saddam; and the military, which the regime strictly controls, even to the tactical decisionmaking level.

The Ba'th Party is the key avenue for political advancement. No longer dominated by ideologues, the party is led by men who have proved their ability to mold public opinion and to organize and broaden popular support—particularly among Iraqi Shias. Iraq's next generation of leaders probably will be drawn primarily from the ranks of the regional party bosses. Technocrats also are gaining political stature, and many may become leaders in Iraq's postwar society, using their expertise to rebuild the war-ravaged economy.

If the regime remains intact throughout the war with Iran, collegial rule will probably continue. The leadership recognizes the collective approach is the most effective way to rule the country as long as the war lasts. Moreover, Iraqi leaders know any shakeup of the system would weaken public confidence in the regime, risk damaging already low public morale, and impair the functioning of the government. Although there are differences of opinion within the RCC about how to deal with the war, the regime's leaders continue to act as one on policy toward the nearly six-year conflict. This reflects, in part, concerns that open squabbling would only play into Iranian hands.

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If the war ends with the present regime intact, we see two possible scenarios for leadership politics—a continuation of the collegial style that could, over the long run, lead to a permanent restructuring of the political system with a lessening of the President's influence; or a return to strict one-man rule, probably through a purge by Saddam or as a result of a struggle among his successors.

US-Iraqi relations would be more likely to flourish under continued collegial leadership in Baghdad than if one-man rule reemerged. Collective leadership has produced a more open society and led to the first modern constituencies in the country's history. Some of these constituencies—in particular the technocrats—are well disposed toward the United States. Collegial rule is also more likely to promote stability in Iraq, which in turn would promote greater stability in the Persian Gulf region. A reversion to one-man rule would probably lead to recurrent violence and turmoil.

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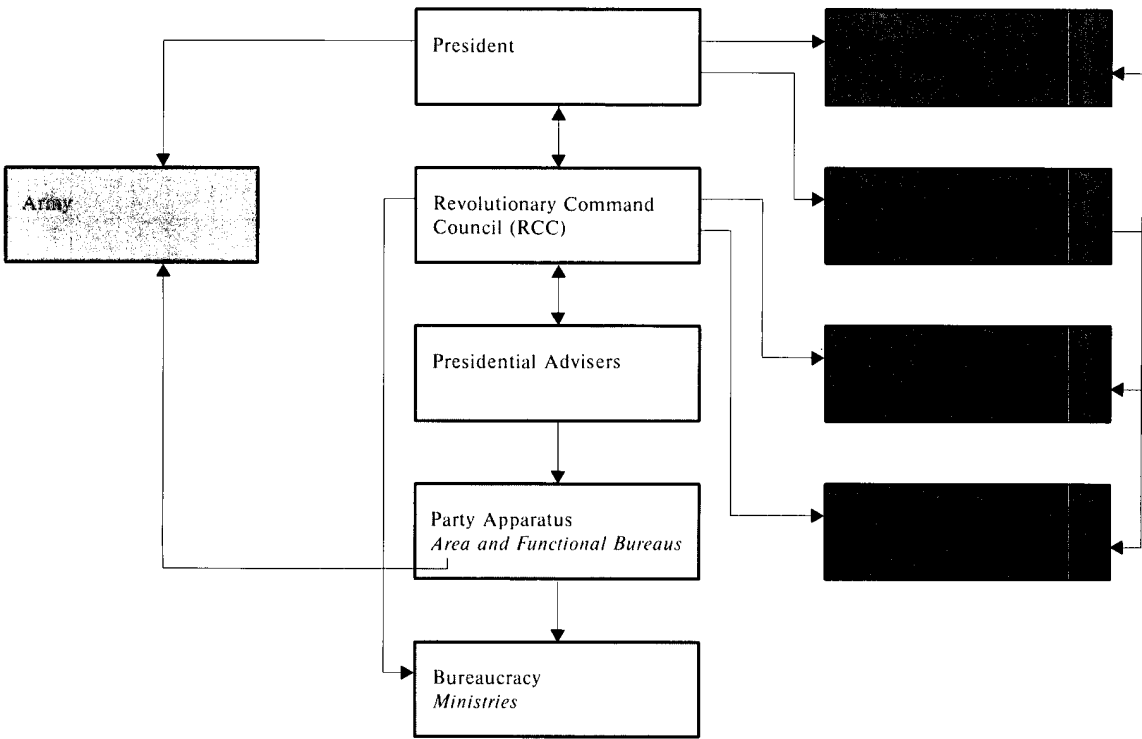
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Figure 1
Iraq's Wartime Government



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**Iraq's Wartime Government:
Power Shifts in the Regime**

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During the 1960s and 1970s, Iraq was one of the most unstable countries in the Middle East. Various strongmen fought each other to assert their absolute authority over the country, producing a succession of bloody coups and a long, costly civil war from 1961 until 1975 between Arab Iraqis and the Kurdish population.

The Ba'th Party seized power in 1968, eliminating rival claimants and organizing a repressive security apparatus that turned the country into a police state. Iraq's present ruler, Saddam Husayn, became President in 1979 and, according to US diplomats, intensified repression throughout the country. He also appointed a number of family members to powerful government posts to solidify his regime's grip on power, a move that antagonized many Ba'th leaders. US diplomats have suggested that these appointments backfired on Saddam, essentially leading to a narrowing of his support both within the party and the population at large.

We believe that Saddam launched the war against Iran in 1980 partly in the hope that a decisive victory would bolster his sagging prestige. Iraq's early successes shored up Saddam's political fortunes, but the growing public realization that the war would be a long one led to a further erosion of Saddam's support. US diplomats state that by mid-1982 the President feared enemies within the party were about to overthrow him.

In response, Saddam moved to buttress his position by purging nine of the Ba'th's 17 leaders at a hastily convened party congress in June 1982. According to US diplomats, he promised to consult with the seven loyalists who survived on all important policy matters if they would continue to support his presidency. The remaining seven, along with Saddam and one other nonparty member, constitute the present leadership and represent the Ba'th Party, the bureaucracy, the military, and the intelligence and security services—the four key pillars of the regime.

Changes in Leadership in Iraq

Since Iraq's revolution against the monarchy in 1958, the country's leadership has changed hands six times:

Leader	Dates in Power	How Removed
Gen. Abd al-Karim Qasim	1958-63	Assassinated in a coup
First Ba'th regime	1963	Overthrown by military
Gen. Abd al-Salam Aref	1963-66	Killed in helicopter crash
Gen. Abd al-Rahman Aref	1966-68	Overthrown by Ba'th
Gen. Ahmad Hasan Bakr	1968-79	Replaced by Saddam Husayn
Saddam Husayn	1979-	

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We believe that Saddam's turn toward more collegial decisionmaking has helped stabilize Iraq's political system. The party leaders who joined Saddam all represent important constituencies, and this has broadened the regime's power base. In addition, US diplomats argue that the regime is remarkably cohesive, although Saddam and his colleagues may have merely suppressed their feuding because they know that Iran will take advantage of such differences in its effort to drive them from power.

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The Revolutionary Command Council

All the leaders who agreed to support Saddam in 1982 sit with him on the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the ultimate decisionmaking body in Iraq. The dominance of the RCC is in part obscured by the confusing Iraqi edifice of power, which has several seemingly important bodies that ostensibly check the

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The Tikritis

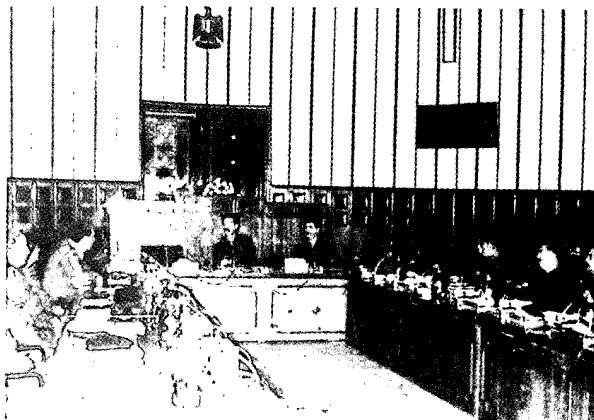
For most of this century, Iraqi politics have tended to be dominated by particular provincial groups. Since the rise to power of the Ba'th Party, the Tikritis have been one of the more influential of these regional blocs. Tikrit, a city north of Baghdad, has given Iraq two presidents—Saddam and his predecessor Gen. Ahmad Hasan Bakr. Other important Tikriti politicians include Defense Minister 'Adnan Khayrallah and Barzan al-Tikriti, Saddam's half brother, the former head of Iraqi intelligence. The Tikritis, though powerful, are not popular in Iraq. Pursuing narrow regional interests, many are reputed to be bigots, committed to the supremacy of Iraq's Arab Sunni minority. The Kurds are deeply suspicious of the Tikritis.

Barzan, while he was in office, was despised by Kurdish tribal leaders. The Shias also mistrust the Tikritis. Under General Bakr's tenure as President, the weight of the Shias in the party was drastically reduced. Only with the rise to power of Saddam did the Shias begin to overcome their second-class status. Saddam has tried to make himself the leader of all areas and groups in Iraq.

authority of the RCC.¹ In fact, these other bodies are virtually powerless; there is no rival to the RCC. The members of the Council include—in order of our assessment of their importance and influence—Saddam Husayn, First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasin Ramadan, Foreign Minister Tariq 'Aziz, RCC Vice Chairman Izzat Ibrahim, Interior Minister Sa'dun Shakir, Trade Minister Hassan Ali, Chairman of the Popular Progressive National Front Na'im Haddad, Defense Minister 'Adnan Khayrallah, and Iraqi Vice President Taha Muhyi al-Din Ma'ruf² (see appendix).

¹ For example, the system includes a so-called National Command Council and Regional Command Council, whose authority supposedly equals that of the Revolutionary Command Council. In fact, US diplomats have described the National Command as practically moribund and the Regional Command as merely an instrument for implementing decrees of the RCC.

² Ma'ruf was appointed to the RCC to curry favor with Iraq's Kurdish community. The Kurds make up 20 percent of the population and are largely disaffected from the central government. Ma'ruf is not a Ba'th Party member, and we believe he has little power.



Revolutionary Command Council

The Cohesiveness of the RCC

With the exception of Ma'ruf, the members of the RCC have shared the same formative political experiences and appear to be well disposed toward each other. Their political attitudes were shaped in the 1950s when they participated in street battles against both the monarchists and the Communists. They all have served prison terms and spent years in hiding, either underground in Iraq or in exile.

US diplomats state that the members still consider themselves "revolutionaries," imbued with the principles of the pan-Arabism formulated in the writings of Michael Aflaq, the founder of Ba'thism. They support Palestinian nationalism and regard Israel as expansionist. They are—to varying degrees—committed to socialism as both a political and economic model.

We believe that the similar backgrounds of the RCC members explain, in part, why the Council has been able to move toward a more collegial approach.

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Principles of the Ba'th Party

The Ba'th Party, founded in the late 1940s, was based on Arab nationalism and has proved—compared with other Arab political parties—quite successful. Today it holds power in Iraq and Syria and has followings in Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, and North Yemen. The party's three main tenets are Arab unity, freedom, and socialism. Ba'thists have long promoted Arab unification and were briefly successful in forming a federation of Iraq and Syria in 1963. The Iraqi and Syrian Ba'thists eventually split, however, in part because of strong opposition to union inside Iraq—mainly by Shias and Kurds. With the boom in world oil prices in 1973, the Iraqi Ba'thists turned away from unification efforts and focused instead on using Iraq's oil wealth to build a strong Iraqi nation.

Freedom is a Ba'thist code word for anti-imperialism. In the 1950s the major imperialist power in Ba'thist eyes was Great Britain. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, however, the United States assumed this role. To a lesser extent, Ba'thists view the Soviet Union as imperialist. Despite Baghdad's reliance on Moscow for much of its military hardware, Iraqi Ba'thists have been particularly suspicious of the Soviet Union since Moscow temporarily cut off arms supplies to Iraq in the first days of the Iran-Iraq war.

Ba'thist notions of socialism tend to be fairly simplistic—socialism, First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan told a Western academic, is seeing to it that everybody has bread. Before the Iran-Iraq war, the Ba'thists generally were successful in raising living standards and literacy rates among Iraqis. The good will engendered by these moves has benefited the regime during the war years—Iraqis appear to believe that, if they can defeat Iran, the postwar period will bring renewed prosperity.

Despite the general cohesiveness of the RCC, there are differences between members over policy toward Washington and Moscow.

Na'im Haddad apparently dislikes the United States. Foreign Minister 'Aziz, on the other hand, makes no secret of his admiration for the West and the United States in particular. Saddam has had a stormy relationship with the Soviet Union, dating from the early 1980s, when, according to US Embassy reporting, he infuriated Soviet leaders by attacking Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan. The diplomats say First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan's attitude toward the United States recently has undergone a transformation. He formerly was sharply at odds with Washington, but, since the United States agreed to assist Iraqi efforts to cut off arms to Iran, he has granted a number of interviews to US visitors and praised US-Iraqi relations, calling for greater contacts between the two countries.

Our information is sketchy, but it suggests that RCC members differ on other issues as well. For example, Embassy officials report that a minority of RCC members consistently has refused to make concessions to the Kurds, despite Saddam's inclination to grant them greater autonomy. Other Embassy reporting indicates that Foreign Minister 'Aziz failed in 1984 to talk First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan into supporting a plan for an oil pipeline from Iraq to Jordan. Public statements by 'Aziz and Ramadan show that the two men hold conflicting views toward ending the war—'Aziz for a long period believed the leadership in Iran eventually would propose negotiations; Ramadan regards the leadership in Tehran as fanatical and says the war will not end until Khomeini dies and the Iranian leadership breaks apart.

The Personalities of the RCC

Saddam Husayn. Without doubt, Saddam is the leading figure on the RCC. Western diplomats caution, however, that, although he dominates the RCC, he does not control it. The diplomats maintain that Saddam's views generally prevail, but, whenever he encounters forceful opposition, he usually seeks to

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compromise. Saddam is, in addition to being President of Iraq and chairman of the RCC, the head of the Ba'th Party and commander in chief of the armed forces. []

Saddam is regarded by diplomats and Western academics as one of the most pragmatic leaders in the Middle East. [] he is impatient with ideology and would "ally with the devil" to achieve his goals. He also is ruthless. []

Saddam has considerable charisma that the regime has successfully exploited to mobilize support for the war. According to US Embassy reporting, Saddam is not a good speaker. When emotionally aroused, however, he conveys great sincerity, which seems to strike a chord in the Iraqis. If he were assassinated or overthrown in a coup, we believe this would be a major psychological blow to Iraqi morale and impair the country's ability to carry on the war. []

Taha Yasin Ramadan. Next to Saddam, in the opinion of US diplomats, the most important figure on the RCC is First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan. He has been described [] as the de facto head of government and Iraq's economic czar. The diplomats believe he is an extremely competent manager with considerable energy. []

Ramadan's role has grown in importance largely because of his success in managing Iraq's economy under wartime conditions and protecting the regime from any backlash from his imposition of wartime austerity measures. In the early years of the fighting, the regime tried to spare the Iraqi people economic hardships by allowing continued imports of luxury goods. By 1983, however, it fell to Ramadan to put brakes on the economy. He introduced regulations to eliminate luxury items from the market, but he also maintained adequate supplies of essentials such as food, clothing, and heating fuel. As a result, his austerity measures did not have a significantly adverse impact on popular morale. []

Iraq's Cult of Personality

The cult of personality surrounding Saddam Husayn has been a feature of Iraqi politics throughout the war. The walls of Baghdad are plastered with posters of Saddam, some several stories high. Iraq's press is filled with praise of the "Sole Leader." Saddam is portrayed as a brilliant wartime strategist, an inspiration to Iraqis at the front, and a clever chief executive whose economic plans conserve the nation's resources. Many Iraqis carry watches with Saddam's face on the dial. []

According to US diplomats, the cult was deliberately contrived by party leaders who feared the party was too elitist to inspire the allegiance of the Iraqi public. They, therefore, decided to humanize the war by making Saddam the symbol of the struggle. Until recently, the diplomats say the cult has been largely effective, particularly with lower-class Iraqis. Those who have observed Saddam's reception in the lower-class neighborhoods of Baghdad say he is received there with genuine warmth. []

The diplomats note that Saddam tends to overdo the cult, however, which has angered some party leaders. They report that in 1985 First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan may have purposely stayed away from celebrations marking Saddam's birthday because he regarded them as overly lavish. After this, the diplomats noted that the cult was toned down. []

Ramadan's next major success, according to the diplomats, was the rescheduling of Iraq's debts in 1984. Following the rise in oil prices in the 1970s, the country's leaders had embarked on an ambitious program to transform Iraq into a modern industrialized state. When the leaders realized that escalating war costs would jeopardize Iraq's development plans, Ramadan convinced foreign governments to take over funding of some 800 projects, promising to reimburse them after the war. []

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Taha Yasin Ramadan (cutting ribbon) and Hassan Ali (far right) [redacted]



Tariq 'Aziz with President Reagan [redacted]

Government technocrats form Ramadan's principal constituency. These experts—mainly in the Ministries of Finance, Oil, Trade, and Planning—assist him in running the government. US Embassy reporting questions whether Ramadan, who began his career as an Army sergeant, has a great deal in common with his proteges, many of whom hold advanced degrees. The diplomats believe, however, that he retains their loyalty by defending their interests. For example, according to US diplomats, Ramadan prevailed over Saddam's objections in 1983 in the appointment of Hisham Tawfiq as Finance Minister. [redacted]

Diplomatic sources in Baghdad have reported that Saddam would like to get rid of Ramadan, fearing him as a potential rival. Nonetheless, Ramadan is accorded publicity in the newspapers and on television second only to that given the President. He also commands the 750,000-man Popular Army, the Ba'th Party's militia. We agree with US diplomats that Saddam and Ramadan, although not personally close, cooperate out of necessity—Saddam by his charisma and tight control of Iraq's security services maintains popular support for the regime, but he needs Ramadan's organizational skills to keep the government operating on a wartime footing. [redacted]

Tariq 'Aziz. Foreign Minister 'Aziz is, in our view, the next most important figure on the Council after Saddam and Ramadan. In the same way that Ramadan directs Iraq's economy, 'Aziz is the major influence on foreign policy. [redacted]

US diplomats credit 'Aziz with devising the strategy to attempt a worldwide embargo on arms sales to Iran. 'Aziz also was instrumental in persuading his colleagues to renew diplomatic relations with Washington. Diplomats believe it was 'Aziz who persuaded Saddam to expel Abu Nidal from Baghdad in 1985, which enabled Washington to remove Iraq from a list of nations supporting terrorism and to begin exporting US technology to Iraq. [redacted]

We believe that 'Aziz's position as the lone Christian on the RCC has made him sensitive to the need for more representation for Iraq's minorities in the bureaucracy. He has appointed large numbers of Christians, Kurds, and Shias to important posts in his own ministry.³ [redacted]

Abd al-Jabbar Haddawi, in charge of developed countries, is a Shia; Peter Yussif, the Ministry's Third World director, is a Christian; and Ismet Kittani, Iraq's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, is a Kurd. [redacted]

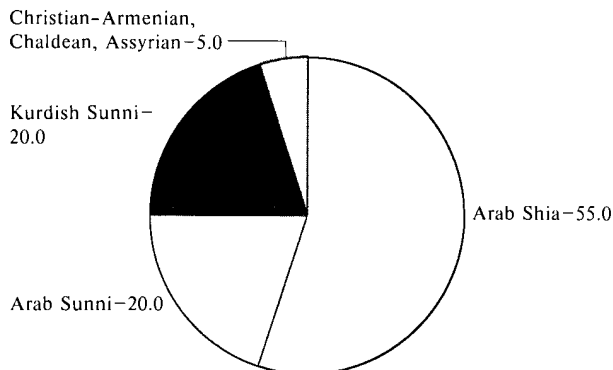
³ Since they make up a majority of Iraq's population, Iraq's Shias cannot be called a minority. Nonetheless, until the advent of the present regime, the much smaller—and dominant—Arab Sunni group treated the Shias as second-class citizens. [redacted]

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Figure 2
Religious Breakdown in Iraq

Percent



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We believe that 'Aziz's Christian background is an asset in dealing with Saddam, who, according to US Embassy reporting, trusts 'Aziz because he does not view him as a threat. Although not forbidden by law, we believe that a Christian could not become President of Iraq, a predominantly Muslim nation.

Izzat Ibrahim. Ibrahim, the RCC's vice chairman, is officially the ranking RCC member after Saddam. According to US diplomats, he is influential within the party; a Western diplomat has described him as the "institutional memory of the Ba'th." He knows the party apparatus intimately and is one of the few who can make it work smoothly. For a number of years he has been secretary of the party's powerful Military Bureau, which certifies Army officers for promotion, and this has enabled him to develop a constituency in the armed forces.

At the same time, we believe Ibrahim lacks the political potential of either Ramadan or 'Aziz. The US Embassy states he does not appear to be ambitious and has a lackluster personality.



King Fahd and Izzat Ibrahim

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diplomats have reported he would like to retire. Like 'Aziz, Ibrahim is trusted by Saddam because he is not viewed as a threat.

Sa'dun Shakir. Interior Minister Sa'dun Shakir has long been one of the regime's major protectors. For years he was the party's boss in Baghdad. He also has had a long career in police work and has directed Iraq's chief intelligence service, the Mukhabarat. As a result, we believe that Shakir, with his numerous contacts in the Iraqi capital, protects the party's base there.

US diplomats have asserted that Shakir is someone to whom Saddam would turn in a crisis. During the 1950s, when the Ba'th was driven underground in Iraq, the diplomats say Shakir provided hideouts for members, one of whom was Saddam. Shakir, according to Western diplomats, is an intimidating personality.

Hassan Ali and Na'im Haddad. Trade Minister Ali and Chairman of the Popular Progressive National Front Haddad are Shias.⁴ US diplomats say that

⁴ The Front is a collection of weak political parties that the Ba'thists use to bolster the image of popular support. It lost considerable significance in 1979 when the regime expelled the Communists, and today it exists largely on paper.

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Saddam values the two men because of their connections to the Shia community. Both are veteran Ba'thists and comrades of Saddam from the early 1950s.

Ali has undertaken important domestic and foreign trade assignments for the regime. He is a member—along with Ramadan—of the powerful Foreign Economic Relations Committee, which directs Iraq's overseas trade. According to US diplomats, Ali and Ramadan work closely together. Like Ramadan, Ali has a reputation for toughness. A US official has described him as "radiating brutality."

We believe that Haddad is Iraq's point man for radical causes. As chairman of the nearly moribund Popular Progressive National Front, Haddad once was active in developing relations with the Soviet Union, the Iraqi Communist Party, and the Palestinians. Now that Iraq has moderated its support for radical causes, Haddad's influence appears to be diminishing. We believe his political stature would increase, however, if the regime decided to resume a more radical course.

'Adnan Khayrallah. Defense Minister Khayrallah is used by Saddam to deflect criticism about the conduct of the war. In the first two years of Saddam's rule, US Embassy reporting indicates, Khayrallah was influential, but his impact has waned with successive defeats in the war. We do not believe he has a significant constituency in the armed services.

Khayrallah is a cousin of Saddam and is married to his wife's sister.

The Party

The Ba'th Party, through which all but one of the RCC members gained his political experience and position, is the sole avenue of political advance in Iraq. There are no significant opposition parties, and the religious establishment is tightly controlled by RCC members, all of whom are committed secularists. With the exception of warring Kurds, who are carrying on a low-level insurrection in the north, competing power centers do not exist in Iraq.



Informal gathering of RCC members

The party's main function is to carry out the directives of the RCC. To accomplish this, diplomatic sources in Baghdad report the party apparatus is organized into geographical bureaus covering the northern, southern, central, Baghdad, and Euphrates regions of Iraq. Party bosses are the supreme authorities in these regions. They wield the power of prefects or governors.

Talented party bosses can—and frequently do—become ministers in the government bureaucracy. 'Abd al-Wahab al-Shaykhli, a boss of the Baghdad Bureau, last year became Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, an important post given Iraq's drive to acquire Western technology. If al-Shaykhli retains the Ministry, he is likely to have increasing responsibilities for dealing with US officials.

The Party Bosses

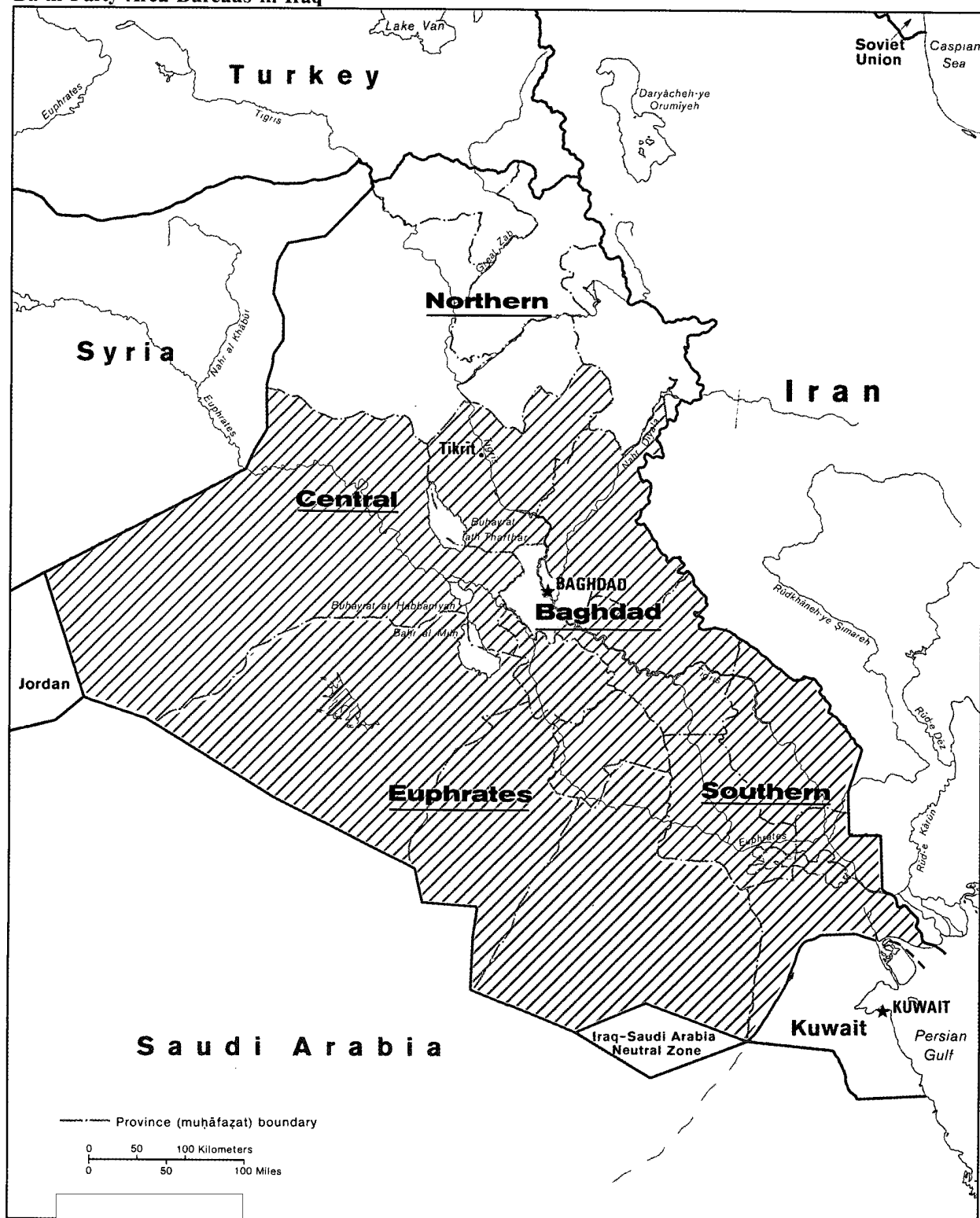
In our view, the RCC will look to the senior party bosses as the next generation of Iraqi leaders. According to US diplomats, in 1982 the RCC elevated six such bosses to newly created posts as presidential advisers. They sit in on RCC meetings and participate in its debates as nonvoting members. Those of the six who stay in the regime's good graces are almost certain to become RCC members.

An examination of the backgrounds of the six reveals what the regime looks for in Iraq's future leaders. All, according to US diplomats, were outstanding administrators of potentially disruptive regions. Muhammad

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Figure 3
Ba'th Party Area Bureaus in Iraq



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Hamza al-Zubaydi, for example, defused explosive political and social tensions early in the war in the predominantly Shia province of Al Basrah. He staged large rallies in support of the regime, and, according to the diplomats, developed a network of agents that infiltrated the outlawed Shia opposition Dawa Party and helped expose it to the police. []

'Abd al-Wahab al-Shaykhli was instrumental in shoring up support for the regime in Baghdad's turbulent Al Thawra district, where most of the capital's 1 million Shias live. As de facto mayor of Baghdad, he rehabilitated the district, which US diplomats have called one of the worst slums in the Middle East (the district is now called Saddam City). Many local Shias regard al-Shaykhli as a hero for upgrading their quarter, US diplomats report. []

Five of the new advisers—al-Zubaydi, Abd al-Ghani Abd al-Ghafur, Mazban Hadi, Abd al-Hasan Rahi Fir'awn, and Sa'di Mahdi Salih—are Shias, and we believe this shows the regime's determination to hold on to the allegiance of this important community. US Embassy officials have suggested that, by elevating Shias to prominent posts in the government, the regime hopes to offset Iranian propaganda that it discriminates against the Shia community. []

All of the six except al-Shaykhli made their reputations in the provinces, which suggests the regime is also interested in building up the party in the more remote areas of the country. According to US diplomats, the party in the past concentrated its organizing efforts on Baghdad and Saddam's home territory of Tikrit, north of the capital. []

Since Saddam took over as President, the party has been trying to broaden its membership to counter popular perceptions that it is elitist. US diplomats estimate the party has about 1 million candidate members and 40,000 full members. The candidates must undergo a probationary period before being admitted. The probation can be onerous, according to the diplomats, involving long hours of party work and drilling in party ideology. It also can take up to seven years before a candidate is fully accepted. []

The Party Bureaus

In our view, the area bureaus are the most important organs of the party. It is through the area bureaus that the regime exercises discipline over the party cadres. []

The party also has functional bureaus that sign up members according to work specialties. Diplomatic sources in Baghdad report that the Vocational, Military, Students and Youth, Labor, and Peasants Bureaus are the most significant. []

The party's Military Bureau—which has responsibility for political organization in and oversight of the Iraqi armed forces—is controlled directly by RCC members. []

The Bureaucracy

Over the last decade, Iraq's large bureaucracy has become an increasingly important power center.⁵ All major industries in Iraq are nationalized—except for agriculture, which is largely in private hands—and, as a result, a large part of Iraq's labor force is employed by the government. []

[] Iraq's bureaucracy started growing shortly after the 1973 oil boom. Prior to that, it was directed mainly by so-called party experts, who, according to US diplomats, were largely hacks who owed their positions to political connections. []

Even after growth began in the 1970s, the regime tried restricting important ministerial posts to Ba'th-ists []

⁵ We have no precise statistics on the size of the Iraqi bureaucracy, but [] estimated that it may number as high as 667,000. []

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Ultimately, the leadership relented and made talent the major criterion for bureaucratic advancement. Today, US diplomats say, many top Iraqi officials—like Oil Minister Ahmad Taqi al-'Uraybi—are not party members. An Iraqi official recently drew the attention of a US diplomat to the fact that five of the six high-ranking bureaucrats seated with them at a banquet were not Ba'thists. [REDACTED]

Despite the increasing independence of the bureaucracy and its growing role as a key prop of the regime, it has not yet established itself as a conduit for membership on the RCC. No one has ever made it to the RCC solely because he was a successful bureaucrat. Former Foreign Minister Sa'dun Hammadi came closest—being frequently invited to sit in on RCC deliberations—but [REDACTED] Hammadi was never a heavyweight in the regime. [REDACTED]

We believe that with the end of the war the bureaucrats' political importance will increase as the regime looks to them to rebuild the country. Under such conditions, it seems likely that—as has occurred in the Soviet Union—expert managers will be elevated to the supreme governing body. Likely candidates for RCC membership, in our view, are Oil Minister Taqi al-'Uraybi and Minister of Finance Hisham Tawfiq. [REDACTED]

The Intelligence and Security Services

Despite former Mukhabarat director Shakir's presence on the RCC, we believe that the influence of Iraq's security and intelligence establishment has waned since a purge in 1983. It consists of four agencies—the Iraqi Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat), the internal police force, Military Intelligence, and the Palace security unit. [REDACTED]

In the early 1980s, Saddam's family, the Tikritis, took control of the Mukhabarat, making it their personal power base. Saddam's half brother, Barzan al-Tikriti, was installed as Mukhabarat director. Barzan appointed Tikritis to important posts. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and ultimately the clan virtually annexed the security establishment. [REDACTED]

Following Saddam's pact with Ba'th leaders in 1982, a power struggle developed between them and Barzan, who, according to diplomatic sources, resented the RCC members' influence on his half brother. Tensions came to a head in the summer of 1983, when, according to US diplomats, Barzan ordered the arrest of leading Ba'thists whom he accused of sedition. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] according to a diplomatic source, the party leaders pressed the President to investigate his half brother's activities. [REDACTED]

Embassy officials commented at the time that Barzan's fall advanced the fortunes of the RCC because he and other prominent clan members were the main rivals to the party leaders. Saddam's decision to remove his half brother threw the clan into disarray, with some clan members supporting Saddam, others Barzan. US Embassy officials believed that the dismissal of Barzan provided a great boost for the regime's popularity. Barzan was regarded by many Iraqis as a corrupt individual who had climbed far above his station. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Despite Barzan's dismissal, family ties to Saddam persist in the security establishment because the President retained a number of cousins in important security posts. One such cousin, Husayn Kamil al-Majid, heads the Palace security unit. The internal police force is directed by another cousin, Hasan Ali al-Majid.

[REDACTED]

According to US diplomats in Baghdad, the party leaders believed that, during Saddam's absence, Husayn Kamil—not RCC Vice Chairman Ibrahim—was the real power in Baghdad.

[REDACTED]

The Military

The military has played an almost constant role in Iraqi politics since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. Practically all of Iraq's subsequent leaders have been officers who seized power in successive coups.⁶ The Ba'th Party's first attempt at leadership in 1963 was aborted within months by a military overthrow. As a result, Saddam and his Ba'thist colleagues have been particularly wary of the potential for further military involvement in Iraqi politics. Using as his instrument an intelligence unit called the Public Relations Bureau (the unit out of which grew the Mukhabarat), Saddam systematically purged the military in the late 1970s by implicating many officers in alleged antiregime activity and executing them.

⁶ The exception is Saddam, who has no military background and who came to power peacefully, the anointed successor of Gen. Ahmad Hasan Bakr. Nonetheless, since taking power, Saddam has endeavored to portray himself as a military figure. He has assumed the rank of marshal and is invariably seen in public wearing a military uniform.

To maintain the military's loyalty, Iraq's civilian leaders have tried—since they took power in 1968—to assign Ba'thists to senior commands wherever possible.

[REDACTED]

The present Chief of Staff, Jawad Thanun, was a Ba'th Party activist together with Saddam in the 1960s.

[REDACTED]

The regime monitors the loyalty of commanders throughout the armed forces by attaching political guidance officers to major units.

[REDACTED]

The war presented the regime with a major challenge regarding its control of the military. Iraq's leaders responded by taking over command and control of the prosecution of the war, both to guarantee that orders would be followed and to ensure against the development of power bases within the military for officers with political aspirations. According to diplomatic sources in Baghdad, until mid-1984 the regime insisted on approving all major military operations in advance and made all tactical decisions down to the company level. The practice met with considerable opposition within the officer corps, and, after mid-1984, the source claims, it was restricted to units above the brigade level. Nonetheless, regime interference continued to have a debilitating effect on officer performance and morale. US diplomats say, however, that, since the defeat at Al Faw in February 1986, the regime has been reconsidering policies that discourage initiative by local commanders. The appointment of more aggressive commanders—and any subsequent relinquishment of authority to them—could require the regime to consider relinquishing more political power as well.

At present, the military is the only major power bloc in Iraq not represented on the RCC, and, in our view, there is only a remote possibility that the regime will

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promote a military leader to Iraq's highest governing body. If such a move were to take place, a likely candidate would be Shanshal. According to US diplomats, he has excellent relations with other RCC members, none of whom views him as a threat. Shanshal is not a party member, however, and this might rule him out as a candidate. Lt. Gen. Hisham Fakhri, who conducted the purge of Barzan loyalists in the Mukhabarat in 1983, is a strong party member and, therefore, a more likely choice to join the RCC.

Outlook

We believe that the present system of collective rule in Iraq will last at least until the end of the war. Saddam and his party colleagues probably recognize that—given the wartime emergency—it is the strongest and most expedient approach to decisionmaking. Instead of limiting power to Saddam and his cronies and family members, it exploits the considerable expertise and political savvy of other key party leaders. They can be a check on Saddam, and they can put forth alternative views and more thoroughly explore the consequences of contemplated actions in the give-and-take of RCC debates.

Moreover, the system enables the regime to make more effective use of the party apparatus. The leaders, working through their constituencies, can ensure that decrees are implemented speedily and effectively. As a result, according to US diplomats, Iraq's political system is better disciplined and organized than Iran's, which tends to be chaotic.

We also believe that the self-interest of Iraqi leaders helps to keep the present system in operation. Any shakeup in the RCC while the war is going on would betray to the public that the regime was losing confidence in itself. US diplomats say a purge in the leadership could force Iraqi morale—already low—into defeatism.

Moreover, a shakeup of the RCC leadership would impair the functioning of the government. The loss of First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan, for example, would probably demoralize his constituency in the

economic ministries—a major part of Iraq's brain trust. These technocrats look to Ramadan as their leader. Without him, they probably would not operate as efficiently, and some—out of resentment—might withhold cooperation from his successor. The same would apply, in our view, in the cases of Ibrahim and Shakir with their respective followers in the party and the intelligence services.

The regime also knows that the Iranians would exploit any sign of dissension among Iraq's leaders to their advantage. A purge would provide Iran at least with a major propaganda coup and at most with an incentive to try to force the war to a military conclusion.

The ultimate shape of Iraq's political system depends, in our view, on the outcome of the war. Nonetheless, we can sketch two possible scenarios, assuming the present regime survives the conflict intact:

- The first scenario would involve a further strengthening of collegial rule. The odds for this scenario would increase if Iraq's leaders perceived that the challenges of postwar reconstruction required a broad-based effort. For example, some Western diplomats have suggested that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will cut off or sharply reduce aid to Iraq as soon as the war is over. Under such circumstances, it would be difficult—perhaps impossible—for Iraq to rebuild fully its ravaged economy (this certainly would be the case if the price of oil remained depressed). We believe Iraq's leaders would respond by closing ranks to enhance reconstruction efforts and to protect Iraq's regional influence. A prolonged period of cooperation between Saddam and the party leaders, in our view, would bring about a permanent restructuring of the political system. Younger leaders—men like al-Zubaydi and al-Shaykhli—who had grown accustomed to collegial rule, would probably seek to perpetuate it when they became members of the RCC.
- The second scenario would be a return to one-man rule. In such a case, Saddam would seek to take advantage of the end of hostilities to institute another purge to sweep aside rivals like Ramadan

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RCC Leaders and Their Constituencies

	Party	Bureaucracy	Intelligence	Army	Community
Saddam Husayn	Military Bureau presidential advisers		Palace security unit Military Intelligence Mukhabarat ^a	Republican Guards Military Bureau Military Intelligence	Tikrit/Sunni
Taha Yasin Ramadan	Popular Army	Economic ministries Foreign Economic Relations Committee		Popular Army	Mosul/Sunni
Tariq 'Aziz	<i>Al-Thawra</i> (party newspaper)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Ministry			Mosul/Christian
Izzat Ibrahim	Military and Peasants Bureaus	Ministry of Agriculture		Military Bureau	Samarra/Sunni
Sa'dun Shakir	Baghdad Bureau	Interior Ministry	Internal Security Directorate Mukhabarat ^a		Tikrit ^b
Hassan Ali	Labor Bureau	Trade Ministry Foreign Economic Relations Committee			Baghdad/Shia
Na'im Haddad	Popular Progressive National Front				Dhi Qar/Shia
'Adnan Khayrallah	Military Bureau	Defense Ministry		Military Bureau Defense Ministry	Tikrit/Sunni
Taha al-Din Ma'ruf					Sulaymaniya/ Kurd

^a Saddam exerts control over the Mukhabarat through his son Uday, the Deputy Director. The Director, al-Barraq, is a protege of Shakir.

^b There are persistent reports that Shakir is a Shia.

[REDACTED]

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and reassert his earlier near-dictatorial powers. US diplomats cite the cult of personality surrounding Saddam and his disposition to continue it even after the war as signs that this scenario might occur. A move by Saddam against the party leaders would require strong support from the security forces. With Saddam's cousins, Husayn Kamil al-Majid and Hasan Ali al-Majid, in charge of Iraq's primary security services, the President would be well positioned to conduct a purge, and this could lead to the resurgence of power of Saddam's family at the expense of the party. [REDACTED]

It is also possible that continued military defeats inflicted on Iraq could produce a regime change before the war is over. Iraq's military commanders might turn against the RCC members and demand that they relinquish control of war planning to the Army. The RCC probably would resist such a move, leading to serious domestic turmoil and perhaps the replacement of the current regime by a military strongman. [REDACTED]

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Secret**Implications for the United States**

No matter what type of rule evolves in Iraq after the war, Baghdad will almost certainly strive to improve relations with the United States. It wants US technology and looks to Washington for aid against Iran, which will remain a threat to the Iraqi regime even when the war is concluded. []

In our view, chances for active cooperation between Washington and Baghdad would increase if there is collegial rule in Iraq. Since Iraq resumed diplomatic relations with Washington in 1985, practically all RCC members have encouraged visits from US officials. []

We also believe that collegial rule helps create a political climate in Iraq conducive to improved relations. Collective leadership has produced a more open society and led to the first modern constituencies in the country's history. Some of these constituencies—in particular the technocrats—appear well disposed toward the West. In meetings with visiting US officials, the technocrats display a good understanding of Western political systems—many were educated in Europe and the United States—and they express admiration for Western scientific advances. We anticipate that such groups would facilitate the development of closer ties between Baghdad and Washington. []

In addition, we believe that continued collegial rule would promote internal stability in Iraq. The top leaders now have broader support, and their authority and influence touch a wider segment of the community. A more stable Iraq is likely to produce a more self-confident regime that is less of a threat to the Arab Gulf states. []

On the other hand, we foresee difficulties for US-Iraqi relations if the country reverts to one-man rule. Given Iraq's volatile history, such a regime could be expected to maintain itself in power primarily through violence, and in turn it would be subject to coup attempts. []

One-man rule would also probably produce less coherent and more arbitrary decisionmaking, and access to the leadership would probably be severely restricted. Moreover, a return to the narrow, family-based style of government that characterized Iraq before the present collegial rule was introduced would probably drive many of Iraq's most qualified technocrats into voluntary exile, weakening a constituency that favors improved ties to the West. []

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Appendix Members of the RCC



Saddam Husayn

*President (since 1979)
Chairman, RCC (since 1979)*



Taha Yasin Ramadan

*First Deputy Prime Minister
(since 1979)
Commander in Chief, Popular
Army (since 1975)
Member, RCC (since 1969)*

Syigma ©

Shrewd . . . pragmatic . . . the dominant force in Iraq's domestic and foreign policy . . . willing to sacrifice Ba'th Party ideology for economic development and security . . . fled Iraq twice and was imprisoned for political activities during the late 1950s and mid-1960s . . . participated in successful Ba'th coup in 1968 . . . became vice chairman of the RCC in 1969 . . . gradually built his power base and became President in 1979 . . . holds a degree from Baghdad College of Law . . . about 48.

The second-most important figure in the Iraqi Government . . . power bases in the Ba'th Party, government bureaucracy, and Popular Army . . . ruthless and ambitious . . . arrested for antigovernment activities during the 1960s . . . helped bring present Ba'th regime to power in 1968 . . . during the 1970s served as Minister of Industry, Acting Minister of Planning, and Minister of Public Works and Housing . . . has a secondary school education and probably attended the Military College in Baghdad . . . about 48.

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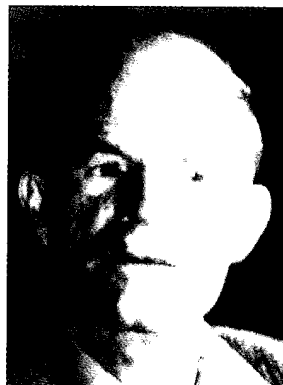
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**Tariq Mikhayl 'Aziz**

*Minister of Foreign Affairs
(since 1983)
Deputy Prime Minister
(since 1979)
Member, RCC (since 1977)*

**Izzat Ibrahim**

*Vice Chairman, RCC
Assistant Secretary General,
Ba'th Party Regional Com-
mand (since 1979)
Member, RCC (since 1969)*

UPI ©

One of President Saddam Husayn's most intelligent and trusted advisers . . . skilled negotiator and chief architect of Iraqi foreign policy . . . a Chaldean Christian . . . served as the Ba'th Party's propagandist (1958-68) . . . participated in successful 1968 Ba'th coup . . . editor in chief of *Al-Thawra*, the official party organ (1969-78) . . . Minister of Information (1974-77) . . . holds a B.A. in English from Baghdad University . . . about 49. [redacted]

Manages the Ba'th Party's daily affairs . . . since 1975 chairman of the party's Military Bureau, which monitors military loyalty . . . [redacted]

[redacted] imprisoned three times in the 1960s for Ba'th Party activities . . . appointed supervisor for provincial development projects after the Ba'th took power in 1968 . . . served successively over the next decade as Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and Interior . . . about 44 . . . a devout Sunni Muslim who practices Sufism (Islamic mysticism). [redacted]

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**Sa'dun Shakir**

Minister of Interior (since 1979)
Member, RCC (since 1977)

**Hassan Ali**

Minister of Trade (since 1977)
Member, RCC (since 1977)

Gained President Saddam Husayn's trust during the 1960s by hiding Saddam and other leaders of the then outlawed Ba'th Party . . . [redacted]

[redacted] active in Ba'th Party since 1955 . . . imprisoned several times as a result of his party affiliation . . . led the Mukhabarat, Iraq's largest intelligence service (1973-77) . . . concurrently ran Baghdad's infamous "Palace of the End" prison . . . holds a degree from the College of Law and Politics of al-Mustansiriya University . . . about 46 . . . like Saddam, is a native of Tikrit. [redacted]

Powerful technocrat . . . close associate of President Saddam Husayn [redacted]

[redacted] . . . longtime Ba'thist who was imprisoned for antiregime activities before the party took power in 1968 . . . appointed to the Arab Affairs Bureau of the RCC in 1969 . . . chairman for the Supreme Agricultural Council (1974-76) . . . Minister of Domestic Trade (1976-77) . . . assumed his present position when the Ministries of Domestic and Foreign Trade merged . . . holds a B.A. degree in political economics from the University of Baghdad . . . about 47. [redacted]

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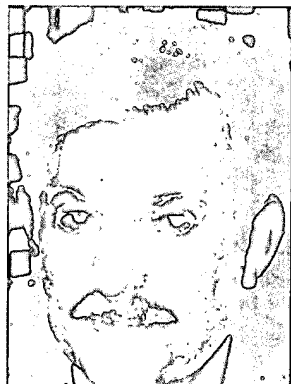
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Secret***Na'im Hamid Haddad***

*Chairman, Popular Progressive
National Front
Member, RCC (since 1977)*

***'Adnan Khayrallah***

*Minister of Defense (since 1977)
Deputy Prime Minister (since
1979)
Deputy Commander in Chief,
Armed Forces (since 1979)
Member, RCC (since 1977)*

Sygma ©

Hardline ideologue and confidant of President Saddam Husayn . . .

[redacted] Ba'th Party activist in the 1950s . . . jailed after the ouster of the 1963 Ba'th regime . . . appointed a provincial governor in 1970, but arrested in 1971 for alleged coup plotting . . . rehabilitated and subsequently served as Minister of Youth (1974-77), Acting Minister of Oil (1975), Minister of State (1977), and Speaker of the National Assembly (1980-84) . . . holds a degree from the Elementary Teachers College in Ba'qubah . . . about 53. [redacted]

Owes his positions to family relations; he is a cousin and brother-in-law of President Saddam Husayn . . . plays only a limited role in formulating military policy, according to US diplomats . . . Iraqi officer corps probably resents him for appointing Ba'th Party members and relatives to commands early in the Iran-Iraq war . . . joined Ba'th Party in 1958 . . . arrested for attempted assassination of former Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim (1959) . . . participated in 1963 and 1968 Ba'th coups . . . holds degrees from the Military College (1961) and College of Law and Politics of al-Mustansiriya University (1976) . . . about 46. [redacted]

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*Taha Muhyi al-Din Ma'ruf**Vice President (since 1974)*

A Kurd who helped found the Kurdish Democratic Party in 1945 . . . has limited influence despite his membership on the RCC and largely ceremonial position as Vice President, which fosters the appearance of Kurdish participation in the government . . . an experienced diplomat . . . served successively in Tehran, Cairo, London, and Jiddah (1949-68) . . . interrupted Foreign Ministry career and moved to London to represent the Kurdish movement (1963-64) . . . was Minister of State in 1968 . . . Ambassador to Italy, with concurrent accreditation to Albania and Malta (1970-74) . . . about 61 . . . law degree from Baghdad University.

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